Blocking and correspondence in Huave vowel copy

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Since the advent of Correspondence-based approaches to segmental interactions, the relationship between Agreement By Correspondence (ABC) and autosegmental operations has been an unresolved issue. Which phenomena are derived by each type of mechanism, and what are the diagnostics? To what extent can some, or even all, spreading and assimilation phenomena be reanalyzed as ABC? More recently, the question has been raised of how interactions among multiple agreement phenomena within a language can be analyzed (Walker 2015). A key thread through all this has been the role of blockers in long-distance agreement. However, the problem of opaque consonants in vowel harmony systems - which presents a challenge for ABC due to the dissimilarities between participating segments - has not received much attention (see Stanton & Zukoff 2018: 677).

In this talk, I present a novel pattern of blocking in vowel-copy epenthesis in Huave (isolate: Mexico) and show that it cannot be accounted for either by autosegmental mechanisms or by previous approaches to blocking in ABC (Hansson 2007, Walker 2015), which focus on cases where blockers and otherwise-interacting segments belong to the same similarity-based correspondence set. In Huave, vowel copy is blocked by intervening consonants that disagree in backness/palatality with the source vowel. Autosegmental analyses fail because of a total-identity effect (Gallagher & Coon 2009) where an incompatible value for one feature blocks propagation of all features (a "sour grapes" pattern in the paradigmatic sense of Padgett 1995). An ABC analysis succeeds because CORR constraints can crucially be violated (Bennett 2013), eliminating vowel pairs from the purview of IDENT-CC, in order to satisfy higher-ranked faithfulness constraints that effect local CV interaction (Kim 2008). Huave thus supports the general analysis of vowel copy as correspondence (Stanton & Zukoff 2018), while adding to the typology of blocking effects.

I further argue that the higher-ranked CV process (which blocks vowel copy) must be analyzed autosegmentally as a case of feature sharing enforced by DEP. Converging evidence against a separate-but-parallel ABC analysis of this phenomenon comes from mirror-image VC patterns in vowel copy to infixes; incompatibility with the regular, non-epenthetic CV phonotactics of the language; and variable non-application of vowel copy in unstressed syllables. I show that the ranking logic around DEP leads to an argument in favor of maintaining CORR constraints as part of ABC, against Walker's (2015) proposal that parametrization of IDENT-CC may eliminate the need for them. Overall, both ABC and autosegmental mechanisms, plus the interactional possibilities provided by Optimality Theory, are needed to model the Huave pattern. I conclude by considering general issues in the analysis of vowel-consonant interactions in ABC theory.